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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 004199

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/PMBS, EAP/IET, EAP/RSP - SU, G/TIP -
TAYLOR/NORIN, AND DRL/CRA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/07/2015

TAGS: PGOV PHUM KWMN KCRM ELAB RP JA

SUBJECT: NUMBER OF FILIPINO "ENTERTAINERS" GOING TO JAPAN

DECLINES

REF: A. MANILA 3500

1B. MANILA - G/TIP 07/11/05 E-MAIL

1C. MANILA 3011

1D. MANILA 1950

1E. MANILA 1747

Classified By: Political Officer Timothy L. Cipullo
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (SBU) Summary: The number of Filipino "entertainers" traveling to Japan has fallen sharply as a result of tighter Japanese visa regulations. This trend is expected to accelerate as applications filed under the older, more lenient rules phase out and all applications become subject to the new rules. The Japanese Embassy is reviewing a proposal that the Philippine Gaming Commission has developed and says is aimed at reducing trafficking in Filipino women. The reduction in the number of Filipinas going to Japan under the "entertainer" rubric is a positive development that will likely lead to fewer incidences of trafficking. End Summary.

"Entertainer" Visas Down by 15,000

12. (U) The number of Filipino "entertainers" departing to Japan from January to July 2005 decreased by almost 15,000 compared to the same period last year. According to the GRP's Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), only 23,359 Overseas Performing Artists (OPAs) left the country for Japan during the first seven months of 2005, down 38 percent from the first seven months of 2004 when 37,958 OPAs were deployed. The drop was especially sharp in July, as a higher percentage of the cases adjudicated fell under the new, stricter rules. The number of OPAs deployed to Japan fell 73 percent from July 2004. According to the POEA, only 291 OPAs have been granted visas under the GoJ's new policies. (Note: The GoJ tightened its immigration policies on March 15, 2005, by refusing to recognize the Artist's Records Book issued by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority of the Philippines as valid proof of competence of Filipino artists, among other areas. The GoJ implemented the rule changes in order to reduce the number of Filipino "entertainers" being trafficked to Japan, many of whom end up working in the commercial sex trade - see ref e. End Note.)

13. (C) In a September 2 meeting, Japanese Labor Attaché Tomoaki Noguchi confirmed to poloff that there had been a sharp reduction in the number of Filipino entertainers traveling to Japan. He added that he expected the numbers to slow even more between now and December 2005 by which time nearly all visa applications will be handled under the new regulations and applications submitted prior to March 15 will have been phased out. Poloff asked Noguchi about the possibility of Filipino recruiting agencies possibly using nursing/caretaker visas as a backdoor to make up for lost entertainer visas, as some observers have suspected. Noguchi said he did not anticipate that this would be a problem, pointing out that nursing and caretaker jobs were more appealing and lucrative than illegal alternatives. In any case, the low number of nursing/caretaker visas available (likely less than 1000 per year - see ref d) are unlikely to have a significant impact on the total number of Filipino "entertainers" in Japan, he said.

GoJ Reviews Gaming Commission Proposal

14. (C) In a recent meeting with poloff, Ephraim Genuino, the Chairman of the GRP's Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR), expressed concern over the Tier II Watch List status of the Philippines in the latest Trafficking in Persons Report. He said PAGCOR had recently sent delegations to Japan to meet with club owners and GOJ officials there to discuss steps to reduce the number of entertainers being lured into illegal prostitution. Genuino shared a copy of a PAGCOR-crafted proposal that would have

Japanese club owners pay recruiting agency fees, Japanese taxes, lodging, and other costs of Filipino entertainers up-front. Currently, many Filipinas arrive in Japan owing large sums of money to recruiters and club owners for agent fees, food, lodging, etc., and Genuino claimed that this situation leads many entertainers into prostitution to pay off their debts. Genuino related that he had given this proposal to the GoJ to review. Noguchi confirmed that the GoJ was reviewing the proposal, but noted that it may be difficult to enforce the terms of such agreements given that club owners often disregard contracts and pay their performers under the table.

Comment

¶5. (C) The reduction in the number of Filipino "entertainers" going to Japan is a positive development that will likely lead to fewer incidences of trafficking. The failure of the new rules to produce immediate results (ref e) appears to have been caused by a surge in applications filed just prior to March 15 when the stricter procedures went into effect. The sharp drop in the number of visas issued under the new rules appears to confirm that the GoJ has made it much harder to obtain an OPA visa. So far, we have not seen any significant moves by Filipino recruiters to circumvent these restrictions. PAGCOR's proposal to pay entertainers' expenses up-front may be a positive step if it were implemented and enforced effectively. The GoJ seems very skeptical -- with ample justification given the issue of enforcement -- and has not yet indicated whether it plans to support the proposal.

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JOHNSON